

Reform or Reaction? Progress or Struggle: Labor and Liberal Perspectives on History

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Introduction

Writers of Australian history – especially prior to the 1970s – were usually either conservatives who emphasised economic ‘progress’, social cohesiveness and harmony, or radicals who majored on struggle, divisiveness and attempts at social and political reform. The history of working class has fallen into the latter category. How then has the Australian Labor Party (ALP), which has always regarded itself as the working class party, interpreted history? The paper surveys some examples of ‘conservative’ and ‘radical’ history, and then examines the ALP’s role in preserving and telling its own history. It discusses the extent to which Labor Party history fits either model above, and how this compares with the Liberal Party of Australia’s concept of its own history. Particular emphasis is placed on Western Australian historiography, which has been the author’s specialist field of research for much of the past decade, including writing a commissioned history of the ALP (WA Branch), but the national context is also discussed.

Progress or struggle?

Most of the major Australian histories written during the first 70 years of the twentieth century tended to express politically conservative views which concentrated on the idea of ‘economic progress’, and to marginalise or ignore violence, protest and disunity. Apart from maintaining silences on the role of European settlers in persecuting and murdering Aboriginal peoples, and the social, political and economic roles of women and people from non-Anglo backgrounds, there was also a tendency to play down divisions in society. For example, in his 1962 history – significantly titled *Australia. The Quiet Continent* – South Australian historian, Douglas Pike, emphasised the ‘blandness’ of Australian history. He gave little prominence to events surrounding the Eureka Stockade in 1854, remarking that, outside of Victoria, they were overshadowed by news of the fall of Sebastopol in the Crimea.¹ Pike did not acknowledge the Victorian government’s heavy censorship of the colonial press as ~~but~~ a probable reason for the lack of media attention. With the exception of Manning Clarke’s massive six-volume history of Australia, alternative histories to the ‘progress’ school tended to be angry little books such as Humphrey McQueen’s *A New Britannia* (1970).

According to conservative scholarship, Australia had a harmonious history where everyone had access to similar opportunities. Professor Tom Stannage observed in a 1985 lecture on ‘the Pioneer Myth’ in Western Australia:

In [the gentry tradition] Western Australia is an open society, one in which even the humblest of men might aspire to prosperity and power, most particularly if he was industrious, thrifty and sober. Throughout the history of Western Australia it is the case that a few servants and later employees outdistanced their masters and their employers, thus providing the origins of the myth that in Western Australia *anyone* who was shrewd and worked hard could acquire wealth and a colonial or state or even national reputation.²

Twentieth-century history fared no better at the hands of conservative historians. Western Australian parliamentarian, Hal Colebatch – who, in 1919, resigned after only one month

as Premier because of industrial conflict with the Waterside Workers’ Union at Fremantle – later compiled a history to commemorate the State’s centenary in 1929. By the time *A Story of a hundred years* was published, hundreds of group settlers had walked off farms in the State’s south-west, unable to cope with inadequate resources and a hostile environment, yet Colebatch wrote without a shade of irony, ‘Australia is a white man’s country in which the conquest of nature is comparatively easy’. Writing three years after the Forrest River massacre of a group of Aboriginal people by two police officers, Colebatch’s exclusive phrase ‘white man’s country’ excluded the presence of the land’s original inhabitants. Surely he could not have forgotten the first hand experience of having his launch stoned by angry wharf labourers and their families in 1919, yet his glib assertion that, settlers in the ‘new land ... have merged more closely with each other than in the country of their origin’ suggests that he chose to ignore deep class differences.³

Even when conservative historians did acknowledge the existence of major protest and upheaval, they often claimed that such events were confined to isolated periods of history; for example World War I or the Depression of the 1930s. In relation to Western Australia in the Depression, F.K. Crowley wrote:

The early 1930s were years of considerable unrest throughout the whole of the State, *an experience it had never known before in its history*. Much of this unrest was due to the economics forced on the Government.⁴

There is nothing in his assessment to suggest that any blame could be apportioned to the state government for having concentrated almost solely on rural industry during the 1920s, nor of the desperation of ordinary people resorting to violence because they could not get work, and certainly no indication that there had been riots, strikes, mob violence and the use of firearms by both police and civilians in Perth in the early post World War I years.⁵ Too often, the accounts of the 1920s lacked analysis, and the decade was passed off as an era when people ‘pursued progress’⁶ Even Socialist historian Humphrey McQueen, while challenging the assumption that the 1920s were ‘unproductive and dull’, and stating that ‘for the first time in Australian history proletarian-based class warfare was widespread’, accepted the notion of a pre-World War I consensus, when he wrote: ‘The consensus which had dominated Australian society for over 60 years was finally, severely, but not irrevocably, broken’.⁷

In general, however, historians of the Left have emphasised the social, political and economic divisions and inequalities that they have found in history. Ian Turner’s work on the Industrial Workers of the World, Gollan’s and Macintyre’s studies of the Communist Party, Fry’s *Rebels and Radicals* – which was truly progressive in the Leftist sense in that it included convicts, women and Aboriginal people – are examples of this type of analysis. More recent ideological studies by Burgmann, Scates and Bongiorno⁸ reveal the complexity of the origins of Socialist thought in Australia and challenge of some of the assumptions of ‘Old Left’ historians such as Spence, Fitzpatrick and Ward. Conservatives, however, have continued to emphasise consensus, marginalising and minimising the significance of discontent and disunity. In 1990, Hal Colebatch – journalist,

historian and son of the previously mentioned Premier – wrote:

[Australia] has had few great dramatic developments – there is nothing in its modern history to compare with, say, the totalitarian revolutions or the re-birth of Democracy in post-war Germany. An historian faces a problem in selecting what is *significant* – and even *what is interesting* – from a vast amount of diverse material.⁹

This simplistic and dismissive assessment is extended to prominent Australians – especially those on the Labor side of politics. Colebatch's uncharitable and unsubstantiated assessment of Prime Minister John Curtin is displayed among the opinions of a number of historians and politicians as part of a permanent exhibition in the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library on the Curtin University campus:

Curtin was a decent man who did the best he could according to his lights. He was not a great Prime Minister. The job was beyond him. His reputation and achievements have been grossly exaggerated by politically biased ALP historians.

This statement suggests that Colebatch regards himself as being without political bias, but that is of course not so. Statements from other public figures alongside Colebatch also show political bias. To ALP members, Fred Daly, Geoff Gallop, and Kim Beazley, Curtin was simply 'our greatest Prime Minister'. Beazley, always sensitive to the importance of historical context, added that Curtin, alone of all Australia's Prime Ministers, bore the responsibility of leading a nation which lived in fear of imminent invasion from a large and hostile power. Paul Keating commented on Curtin's character: he was 'strong, fair, principled and pragmatic'. Conservative politicians were much less at ease in expressing an opinion. The present WA Premier and Liberal Party (WA) Leader, Richard Court – placed in the perhaps invidious position of a conservative politician expected to praise a Labor leader, could manage only a clichéd statement that Curtin was 'unquestionably Australia's man of destiny' who 'pulled the nation together'. He believed that Australians 'consider Curtin is worthy and deserving his place among great Australians' – but withheld his own judgement. Similarly, Court's father, former Premier Sir Charles Court, said that Curtin 'might not be the greatest of Australian Prime Ministers, but he is certainly one of the most respected for his World War II leadership'. The present Prime Minister, John Howard gave an oblique comment that 'the fact that [Curtin] was Prime Minister during a war speaks a lot for his ability'. By Howard's definition, Menzies' loss of office during wartime should reflect adversely on his ability – but apparently not in Howard's opinion. Conservative historian, Geoffrey Blainey, on the other hand, remarked that Curtin was a largely forgotten figure, who deserved to be remembered and 'commemorated' as the man who led Australia in a 'time of peril', because 'in forgetting Curtin we forget the peril and that is unwise'.¹⁰

How does the ALP see itself and its leaders

Where does the Australian Labor Party stand in relation to these trends in Australian historiography? The ALP has always been extremely proud of its history and achievements, even when that history was comparatively short. The Party which now informs readers of its web page that it is 'Australia's only national political party, with branches in every State and Territory',¹¹ is also indisputably Australia's oldest political party. Its major conservative opponent, the present Liberal party has gone through a number of metamorphoses and dates its birth as 1944. The National Country Party was first formed in Western Australia in 1914, and the only other party with a lengthy history, the Australian Communist Party, began in 1920 and dissolved itself in 1991.¹²

'Labor' history – in the context of this paper meaning the

history of the Party and its affiliated trade unions – is characterised by a strong sense of destiny. Party members have often been reminded of their origins of struggle and their duty to work to improve conditions for disadvantaged sections of society.¹³ The Western Australian branch of the ALP celebrates its centenary this year: 1999. Both the State Branch and the Federal ALP have further anniversaries to celebrate over the next few years. In September 2000, it will be 100 years since the first edition of the WA branch's pioneering newspaper, the *Westralian Worker*, rolled off the press in Kalgoorlie. The Federal Caucus celebrates its centenary in 2001, as will the State Parliamentary Labor Party in Western Australia. Trades Halls were significant features of the Labor movement for much of the century, and 2000 will see the centenary of the building in Kalgoorlie. In 2003, it will be a hundred years since the opening of the Fremantle Trades Hall, sadly no longer in existence. The Labor press, like the trades halls, waxed and waned over the century. Neither the *Westralian Worker*, nor the *Australian Worker*, the Sydney-based paper upon which it was modelled, are still in existence. The *Worker* (as the Western paper was generally known) lasted just over half a century, and was succeeded by shorter lived journals, such as the *Western Sun* and the *Labor Voice*. Today, there is only one Labor paper in Australia – the monthly *Labor Herald*. The June 1999 issue features an article on 'Another milestone in Labor's history' – the centenary of the world's first Labor government. Andrew Dawson, Leader of the Queensland Labor Party, formed a government which lasted just seven days in December 1899.¹⁴

Significantly, the first two issues of the *Worker* contained articles which bound the Western Australian branch to its roots interstate and which pointed the way to the future. The first issue contained an article, probably written by founding editor, Thomas Bath, stressing the need for unity. It related the story of South Australian Labor leader, John McPherson, whose deathbed injunction reputedly was: 'Tell the boys to pull together'. These words were adopted as the motto of the Goldfields Labor movement, and hung (probably as a framed text) on the wall of the Workers' Hall in Boulder. They also became part of the *Westralian Worker's* masthead.¹⁵ In May 1999, during the 'Centenary' State Conference, Western Australian ALP Leader, Dr Geoff Gallop – while calling for 'a new agenda for a new century' – invoked the memory of John McPherson, who though dying of cancer at the age of 37, still thought foremost of his beloved Labor movement. Gallop recalled the historical importance of the words 'Tell the boys to pull together' to the WA Labor movement.¹⁶

The other *Worker* article, referred to above, was written by the paper's founding manager, William Dartnell Johnson, who was about to enter a lengthy career in State politics. Johnson wrote:

Labor is emerging from the chrysalis stage of existence, poisoning itself in the general light of knowledge and power, preparatory to taking flight into the unknown realms of political life, which is to justify or condemn its existence.¹⁷

Labor's second Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, had no doubts that Labor's existence was justified. He praised Labor's Federal victory in 1910 as the culmination of 'twenty years of arduous work', whilst the 1912 Federal Conference report 'claimed that "the eyes of all reformers throughout the civilised world are upon us, and watching with sympathy and interest our unequalled progress"'.¹⁸

This is not to say that the majority, or even many, Party members were (or are) well versed in history. As the Federal ALP (which regards its beginning as the 1891 shearers' strike), approached its first half century, certain members became anxious about whether its history – and the history of the working classes in general – was being lost. In May 1933, John Curtin wrote:

...[T]he years are going by and the story of the early efforts to

establish trades unions in the various States and the Commonwealth is being forgotten ... It does a nation good to remember its sufferings, because thereby it is compelled to remember the cause of its sufferings, and remembering their origin, it takes care to prevent a recurrence of them ... A Napoleon appears in Europe and suddenly kicks throne after throne over with his foot; a Hitler appears in Germany and suddenly the trade unions – their press, their political representatives, and their leaders – are stricken dumb. Is it not possible in our lifetime for the Labour Movement in Australia to be challenged[?]'¹⁹

Ironically, 18 months after Curtin wrote these words, the then Attorney-General in the Lyons Government, Robert Menzies, went to extraordinary lengths to silence Socialist writer, Egon Kisch, an overseas visitor who had been invited to Australia by the Movement Against War and Fascism to speak about the conditions which he had experienced in Nazi prison camps.²⁰

The ALP has, perhaps, been particularly fortunate that a number of its prominent members have been trained academically in history and related disciplines such as law, and that these some of these leaders have chosen to write and reflect upon the Party. According to Kylie Tennant, Evatt's motivations for writing history were complex.

Evatt's social and political histories were partly a search for a recurring pattern. We are accustomed to think of him as a man of enormous self-confidence, but, lonely under the single lamp in his study, what he found must have been disconcerting ... He had faith that a reasonable cause presented with intelligence and force must succeed. He found, when he studied his country's history, that some sinister yet profound and human factor operated against this ... At the time he wrote, Fascism was rising, the Western precursor of the racial nationalism that was later to devastate the whole world, particularly in Asia and Africa. Tiny but clear, it lay like a deadly worm twisting the root stock of his land's history ...²¹

When he embarked on a biography of W.A. Holman, Leader of the Labor Party in NSW, who left the Party over the issue of military conscription in World War I, Evatt was troubled by another question: 'Were Labour men like Holman always certain, as Gordon Childre claimed, to move away from Labour when there came a conflict between their beliefs and their opportunities?'²² Another Parliamentarian, Norman Makin, however, was confident that governing that not corrupted the Party's Federal Leaders. In 1958, Makin, the Member for Bonython in South Australia, who had served in Curtin's wartime cabinet, completed a typescript entitled 'Fifty Years of Labor Leadership (1901-1951)' and requested ALP Federal President, F.E. Chamberlain, to write a Preface. The book contained profiles of Watson, Fisher, Hughes, Tudor, Charlton, Scullin, Curtin, Ford and Chifley. The foreword set out Makin's motivation in writing the history:

The time is long over due when some volume of this kind should be written of the great men who have, through the years, taken the lead in the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Labor Party. Although in office less than one third of the first fifty years of the Commonwealth Parliament, important legislation initiated and administered has made the efforts of Labor an outstanding contribution to the progress, and even greater still, the well-being and security of the Australian people ...

The Australian Labor Party stands as the greatest of all Australian political movements, and breathes more of the Australian sentiment and outlook than any other political organisation. It has its roots firmly established in the life of the Australian people. It has not identified with any other movements, either to the right or the left. It has [contributed], and will continue to contribute

to the great destiny of this country.²³

Being Labor men of their time, Evatt and Makin did not spare much thought for the contribution of ALP women members, nor for the bias under which they laboured even in a Party which claimed to be 'progressive'. But this omission – despite its seriousness – does not lessen the significance of the sentiments above. By Makin's analysis, not only is the ALP the real party of the Australian people, but Australian history is valuable, worthwhile and interesting simply because it is a history of the working people. It is not uninspiring, uninteresting, bland, a pallid reflection of more ancient civilisations – as the Colebatches have suggested.

At the end of the twentieth century, there are still historians in the ALP. Both the Federal Opposition Leader, Kim Beazley, and the WA State Opposition Leader, Geoff Gallop, studied History and Politics at University and distinguished themselves in the field as recipients of Rhodes' Scholarships. Paul Keating, too, showed a partisan interest in history during his Prime Ministership. Shortly after Labor's 'unwinnable' victory in the 1993 Federal election, a jubilant Keating was interviewed for Channel Nine's '60 Minutes'. In the comfortable surrounds of his private study at the Lodge, Keating (uncharacteristically casual in an open-necked shirt), spoke of the role Labor would play in developing Australia over the next few years. He spoke of his immense satisfaction at being given the chance to 'plunge the knife into the heart of Menzies' creation' and build a new Australia.²⁴ By 'Menzies creation', Keating meant the imprint of 23 years of conservative government (during 16 of which Menzies was Prime Minister), on Australian politics, society and economics. The era of the '50s and '60s is only now being subject to the scrutiny of academic research. Menzies' other creation, the Liberal Party of Australia, still awaits a serious, academic history. Why is this so? How do the Liberals see themselves? Do they not take pride in their history?

Liberal Party history

According to former Senator, Chris Puplick, most Liberals show little understanding of their history, nor do they place much value on it. He contrasts this with the ALP which, he claims, uses history to create and perpetuate 'powerful myths, many of which continue to have political relevance to this day'. Puplick asserts that Labor has managed to perpetuate 'myths' about both the ALP – Curtin as a great wartime leader, Chifley as protector of the working class, Whitlam as a visionary – and the Liberal Party – the Menzies era was one of national stagnation, the Fraser era was 'years of wasted opportunity' – even though 'like Labor's positive myths, these negative [Liberal] myths are also untrue'. This is because 'Labor is proud of its history which it gilds, the Liberals are ashamed of theirs which they conceal'.²⁵ While this assertion may simplistic, even crass, Puplick does make one particularly acute observation: that Liberal Party shows little empathy for 'deeply held Australian values'. But it is difficult to see how his solution – to take a 'proud position in defence of its own history' – is going to change the Party's lack of empathy with Australian values.²⁶

Unfortunately, Puplick has not elaborated on his statement that Liberals are 'ashamed' of their history. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say they are ignored and confused about their history. They don't even know how long their Party has existed. According to Dean Jaenesch, a Reader in Politics at Flinders University, it would surprise some Liberals to know that the Liberal Party was 100 years old in 1994 – not a mere 50 years old.²⁷ Yet the official celebrations that took place in 1994, and the launching of Henderson's book,

Menzies Child. The Liberal Party of Australia: – the closest attempt yet made to an official history – all commemorated a fiftieth anniversary. Consequently, Henderson is forced to

refer to the Liberal Party's 'pre-history' in describing the activities of the major non-Labor Party for the first half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, Henderson includes brief biographical notes of relevant political figures under the heading 'Biographical notes of *non-Labor dramatis personae* ...'²⁸ It is unfortunate for the Liberals that they are so often known by what they are not. There is Labor, and there is non-Labor.

Another problem is addressed in Henderson's opening sentence, 'There is no consistent and coherent conservative political tradition in Australia'.²⁹ Another curious feature of the Liberal philosophy is the fact that, according to the Party, the name was chosen 'deliberately for its association with progressive nineteenth century free enterprise and social equality'³⁰ – a tradition developed in Britain, not in Australia, which could hardly be called 'progressive' in the mid twentieth century. The 'non-Labor' tag is partly to do with this ideological confusion. In a 1977 study of the Liberals, written during the Fraser administration, entitled *Power without theory*, Deane Wells remarked that the Liberal Party leaders have ranged from conservatives such as Menzies and Gorton to 'small "I" Liberals' (MacMahon and Snedden), whilst Holt was 'a shallow pragmatist', but Fraser was the first to 'set about effecting fundamental changes in the fabric of Australian society'.³¹ Likewise, Judith Brett has stated:

The accession of Malcolm Fraser to the leadership of the federal Liberal Party prompted a reappraisal of Liberal ideology and its relevance to Coalition policy. Fraser's predilection for philosophically-oriented discourse coincided with the outlook of David Kemp, ... his chief political adviser, and the two combined to produce and disseminate a body of ideological argument which has come to be known as 'Fraserism'.³²

If the Party perceived this to be true, then Fraser should receive some recognition in the 'potted history' that it puts on its web page. Yet he is not even mentioned by name. The one page account is devoted almost entirely to Menzies founding the party (in 1944); Howard is the only other Party leader named.³³ The ALP web page, in comparison, includes a paragraph on each Labor Government and contains photographs of all of the Prime Ministers from Curtin to Keating.³⁴ – but in the British, rather than the Australian tradition.

Ascertaining whether the Liberals really do suffer from an ideological vacuum is also difficult because there has been a fair amount of destruction of State records. Because the ALP has always valued its own history, the Party has maintained extensive records, and this has enabled historians to access a considerable body of primary source material. In Western Australia, for example, the ALP papers amount to thousands of correspondence files, almost complete records of State Executive and District Council Minutes of meetings and State and National Conference minutes, from as early as 1911. The Federal body has deposited a large collection in the National Library of Australia in Canberra, and histories of the other state branches reveal the existence of similarly extensive bodies of material in Sydney, Melbourne and elsewhere. The Liberals and their predecessors lacked the Labor passion for keeping records of their activities. According to Ian Hancock, however, there is 'a huge volume of manuscript material' that has 'escaped destructive tendencies of (mainly state) officials' but so far this has not attracted 'serious commentators'.³⁵

Another difference between Labor and Liberal history is the fact that most prominent Liberals have not seen the need to write Party history. One has to wonder why an historian of the calibre of Paul Hasluck, a journalist and historian who entered Federal politics as the Liberal Member for Curtin (WA), after World War II, did not so. Hasluck wrote many words on significant political contemporaries and held a high admiration for Menzies – of whom he remarked: 'he has left political controversy; he is

remote from journalistic sneers and detractions rude and has entered Australian history as one of our major public figures – perhaps even 'our chief of men'.³⁶ Hasluck's major effort in the field was a two-volume history of the Australian homefront during World War II, in which he wrote largely – and not always kindly – about the Curtin administration. Of Curtin himself and his leadership capabilities, Hasluck was far more generous and historically accurate than some of his fellow conservatives, but he, too, doubted that 'Curtin made or could have made any decision that changed the course of events except the decisions to bring troops back to Australia from overseas and not to allow the diversion of the returning troops to Burma'.³⁷ Hasluck saved his vitriol for H.V. Evatt.³⁸

There is little doubt where Hasluck fits in the historical trends outlined at the beginning of this paper. Of Hasluck's autobiography, covering his upbringing and early adult life in Perth, Professor Geoffrey Bolton has written: 'By endorsing the view of WA in those years as a society dominated by a consensual ethos, [the book] engendered historiographic debate from which Hasluck remained aloof'.³⁹ The historical perspective of Hal Colebatch, Senior, briefly Premier of the conservative National Party in 1919 and later a Member of the Legislative ^{Council} Assembly, was discussed earlier and deemed also to fit the consensus and social harmony model of history writing. But what of more modern Liberals? David Kemp, the present Federal Minister for Education, has claimed that the Liberal Party has a 'traditional appeal' centred on 'the belief that individual dignity, the family and the community are at the heart of a strong egalitarian democracy...' Labor, on the other hand, is 'a sectional party ... dominated by trade union officials'.⁴⁰ His inference is that Labor creates division, and that the Liberals are concerned for all levels of society.

The views of the present Liberal Leader, John Howard, are worth noting here also, even though he is not an historian. In his policies and public statements, it is evident that Howard harks back to a 'simpler' age which has little basis in fact. In 1988, when as Leader of the Opposition, his 'One Australia' and 'Future Directions' policies were widely criticised because they promoted images of a white, middle class Australians living in comfortable houses – depicted by an Australian homestead – and, most offensively, indicated the prospect of reduced immigration. Even in 1995, Howard clung to his view that 'sameness' is desirable:

I'm a strong believer that one of the best things that Australia has going for it – or used to have going for it, perhaps – is its egalitarian non-class structure. The fragmentation of that is one of the less happy developments in modern Australia. We are a less equal society ... The distinguishing thing of my years at Earlwood Primary School was the feeling that everybody was about the same. You had a few kids who obviously came from fairly poor families. You had one or two whose fathers had been very successful in small business. And the rest were sort of in the middle.⁴¹

It is difficult to imagine Kim Beazley wishing Australia back to the days of his own comfortable childhood in Claremont, WA. *His* contention that we are 'a less equal society' does not hark back to the supposedly affluent 1950s but is a criticism of the Liberal Government's present policies.

Conclusion

Does a poor sense of history contribute to a lack of vision? This paper suggests that it does. Stuart Macintyre reflected upon the Liberals' lack of historic figures when delivering the 1994 Manning Clark Labor History Memorial Lecture at Hobart. Recalling Keating's victory speech, in which he stated 'This was a victory for the true believers!' Macintyre wondered whom – if anyone –

Liberals would invoke on such an occasion. Deakin, whom a few regard as their real ancestor, is largely forgotten (or misunderstood), Bruce, Latham and Lyons are unknown.⁴² The answer, of course, is Menzies. The Liberal Party's web page, and the continued prominence given to Menzies in the Party's emblems and at its functions suggests yet again that he remains the Party's one true statesman in most Liberal eyes.⁴³

On the other hand, the 1990s have seen two important anniversaries in Federal politics, the hundredth anniversary of Labor and the fiftieth of the present Liberal Party. It has also seen both parties go through a period of soul searching as the Liberals sought to explain their 'impossible' electoral defeat in 1993 and the ALP came to terms with its 'inevitable' defeat of 1996. Henderson points out that it was only in 1993, with the arrival of Professor Alan Martin's biography, that Menzies entered the realm of academic study. And since their semi-centenary, the Liberal Party has at last begun to excite the interest of academic historians, too.

This paper has discussed perceived differences between Labor and Liberal perceptions of history and its importance. Alan Martin, a Labor voter who decided to write about a conservative Prime Minister, added another interesting facet to the debate when he remarked:

It's only natural that most of the research into the lives of Australian politicians has been done by people sympathetic to the Labor movement. It's easy to see why, especially just before Menzies, because the figures like Curtin and Chifley were quite heroic for the Left, with their notions of rebuilding society.⁴⁴

Henderson, who quoted Martin, pointed out that his comment 'overlook[ed] the fact that North American and British conservatives have produced some first rate biographies and histories'. This may be so. But then perhaps British conservatives are not 'ashamed of their history'.

Endnotes

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- 1 D. Pike, *Australia. The Quiet Continent*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1962.
- 2 C.T. Stannage, *Western Australia's Heritage. The Pioneer Myth*, University Extension Monograph Series No. 1, Nedlands, 1985, p. 3.
- 3 H. Colebatch, editor, *A Story of a Hundred Years, Western Australia in 1929*, Perth, 1929, p. 476. For the events at Fremantle which triggered Colebatch's resignation, see B. Oliver, *War and Peace in Western Australia. The social and political impact of the Great War, 1914-1926*, Nedlands, 1995, pp. 175 ff.
- 4 F.K. Crowley, *Australia's Western Third. A history of Western Australia*, London, 1960. Emphasis added.
- 5 Dissension in post World War I Western Australia is discussed in B. Oliver, *War and Peace in Western Australia. The Social and Political Impact of the Great War 1914-1926*. UWA Press, Nedlands, 1995, especially, chapters 4-9.
- 6 Heather Radi, '1920-29' in F.K. Crowley, ed., *A New History of Australia*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1980 edition, p. 358.

- 7 Humphrey McQueen, *From Gallipoli to Petrov: Arguing with Australian History*, Sydney, 1984, p. 6.
- 8 Verity Burgmann, *In Our Time. Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1895-1905*, Sydney, 1985; Bruce Scates, *A New Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, and Frank Bongiorno, *The People's Party. Victorian Labour and the Radical Tradition, 1875-1914*, Melbourne, 1996.
- 9 Hal Colebatch, reviewing Geoffrey Bolton's *Oxford History of Australia, Volume 5, 1942-1988*, in the *West Australian*, 7 July 1990, emphasis added.
- 10 These comments are displayed on the wall in the entrance to *A Man of Peace. A Time of War*, a permanent exhibition of John Curtin's life at the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, Curtin University, Perth.
- 11 'About the ALP' on <<http://www.alp.org.au>>.
- 12 See Lenore Layman, 'The Country Party: Rise and Decline' in R. Pervan & C. Sharman, editors, *Essays on Western Australian Politics*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1979, p. 159; S. Macintyre, 'Communism', in G. Davison, J. Hirst & S. Macintyre, eds, *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 145.
- 13 In a recent interview with the author, Robert McMullan, Member for Fraser (ACT), maintained that this continues to be the Party's aim, irrespective of its social make-up. Robert McMullan, interview, Canberra, 16 June 1999.
- 14 Mike Kaiser, 'Another Milestone in Labor's history', *Labor Herald*, June 1999, p. 4.
- 15 *Westralian Worker*, 7 September and 2 November 1900.
- 16 Author's notes of Dr Gallop's speech, Centenary State Conference, 1999, 8 May.
- 17 *Westralian Worker*, 14 September, 1900, editorial.
- 18 Cited in Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, 1991, pp. 71 (Fisher) and 90 (Conference).
- 19 Cited in D. Black, ed., *In his own Words. John Curtin's Speeches and Writings*, Paradigm Books, Bentley WA, 1995, p. 119.
- 20 B. Oliver, *Peacemongers. Conscientious objectors to military service in Australia, 1911-1945*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1997, pp. 64-66.
- 21 K. Tennant, *Evatt: Politics and Justice*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1970, p. 103.
- 22 Tennant, p. 58.
- 23 A copy of the manuscript and correspondence between Makin and Chamberlain, dated 3 February 1958, is held in the ALP's Papers at the Labor Centre, Beaufort Street, Perth. These papers were sorted into boxes by the author, prior to lodgement with the J.S. Battye Library of Western Australian History at the end of 1999. These papers are in box no. 7.
- 24 Interview with Charles Wooley, broadcast on Channel Nine TV on 21 March 1993.
- 25 C. Puplick, *Is the Party Over? The future of the Liberals*, The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1994, pp. 152-153.
- 26 *Ibid*, p. 153.
- 27 Dean Jaensch, *The Liberals*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994, p. 1.
- 28 Gerard Henderson, *Menzies' Child. The Liberal Party of Australia*, Harper Collins, Sydney, revised edition 1998, pp. 341 ff, emphasis added.
- 29 *Ibid*, p. 41.
- 30 'About the Liberal Party', <<http://www.liberal.org.au>>.
- 31 Dean Wells, *Power without theory. A critical analysis of the Liberal Party philosophies*, Outback Press, Collingwood, 1977, p. 186.
- 32 Judith Brett, 'Fraserism in Theory and Practice' in Brian Costar, ed., *For Better or For Worse. The Federal Coalition*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 21.

- 33 'About the Liberal Party', <<http://www.liberal.org.au>>.
- 34 'ALP History', <<http://www.alp.org.au>>.
- 35 Ian Hancock, 'Liberal Party of Australia' in *Oxford Companion to Australian History*, p. 388.
- 36 Paul Hasluck, *The Light that Time has made*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1995, p. 142.
- 37 *Ibid*, p. 118. Hasluck also wrote a critical account of his time as an official of the Department of Foreign Affairs from 1940-47, during which time he worked mainly under Dr Evatt.
- 38 *Ibid*, pp. 121-133.
- 39 G. Bolton, 'Hasluck, P.M.C.', in *Oxford Companion to Australian History*, p. 302.
- 40 David Kemp, 'A Liberal Vision for the Next Century' in Costar, ed, *For Better or For Worse*, pp. 50-53.
- 41 Cited in Henderson, *Menzies Child*, p. 5.
- 42 S. Macintyre, 'Who Are the True Believers? The Manning Clark Labor History Memorial Lecture. Delivered by Stuart Macintyre at the ALP National Conference, Hobart, 28 September 1994, *Labour History*, No. 68, May 1995, p. 155.
- 43 This point will be illustrated in the spoken paper with an appropriate transparency of Prime Minister Howard speaking on a rostrum below which is hung an enormous portrait of Menzies.
- 44 Cited in Henderson, p. 321.